

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 17, 2018

Agenda Item: Draft Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background

The draft 2019-2028 Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan sets fisheries management direction for the next 10 years and addresses changing fisheries with specific goals and strategies in Canyon Ferry, Hauser, and Holter Reservoirs and two associated Missouri River sections. This draft builds upon two previous management plans with updates to fisheries trend data and incorporates additional information since inception of the previous plan. This draft plan proposes five substantive changes to fisheries management: reduce Canyon Ferry perch goal to six perch per net; incorporate direction from a 2012 Northern pike EA into the plan; use standardized size criteria to evaluate Canyon Ferry and Holter walleye populations; re-evaluation of strategies if budget limitations preclude stocking of catchable sized rainbow trout; allow an open water fishing contest on Holter Reservoir. The plan does not establish the angling regulations but rather suggests strategies that may achieve the proposed management goals.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP established a seven-member citizen scoping committee in 2018 to consider five management strategy changes (see attached Fact Sheet). Scoping committee members represented Walleyes Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, local outfitters, youth fishing interests, local business, outdoor enthusiasts, and an FWP Commissioner. Scoping Committee members reported proposed changes in the plan to their constituents and reported constituent feedback to FWP and the committee. In addition, FWP hosted five open houses in Great Falls, Butte, Bozeman, Helena, and Townsend in July for additional public input. Feedback provided by the citizen scoping committee and at open houses was evaluated for this draft plan. Generally, the public supported the proposed changes to the plan; other topics mentioned by the Scoping Committee and the public included size of fish, forage, adaptability of the plan, and habitat. Recreational concerns regarding the river section below Hauser Dam were also raised, but are not covered in this plan.

Alternatives and Analysis

The Commission may: 1) approve the draft plan for public comment as presented; 2) modify the draft plan and approve for public comment; 3) not approve the draft plan for public comment.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The Scoping Committee and the public were largely supportive of substantive changes proposed in the draft plan. FWP believes the draft plan adequately addresses other concerns raised during scoping, such as fish size and adaptability, through management prescriptions outlined in the plan. FWP recommends approving the draft plan as presented and request public comment.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve the draft 2019-2028 Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan as presented by the department and collect comments on the draft plan.